

AIR WAR COLLEGE

AIR UNIVERSITY

EXAMINING THE ROLE OF CHAPLAINS AS NON-
COMBATANTS WHILE INVOLVED IN RELIGIOUS LEADER
ENGAGEMENT/LIAISON

by

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Introduction

In the summer of 1995 I had the great privilege of being deployed to Incirlik, Turkey, as the Combined Joint Task Force Chaplain. My duties included conducting worship in the tent city at Incirlik as well as counseling and visiting the thousands of joint and coalition forces that were stationed at Incirlik enforcing the Northern no-fly zone of Iraq. The rather typical set of tasks on my job description was augmented by the mandate to periodically visit a coalition of Special Forces troops located in Northern Iraq. To do this, I would board a C-12 and fly about an hour east to a location just north of the Turkey-Iraq border. There, I would climb onto a Blackhawk helicopter that would take me south into Iraq to the base camp of our Special Forces team. Upon arrival I would be shown my billeting arrangements and given a current and necessary threat briefing. Once settled, I would begin my walk around the camp checking in on special operators as well as the Kurdish contactors that were serving as interpreters and security specialists. I heard countless and horrific stories associated with DESERT STORM and its aftermath—stories of the brutality of Saddam Hussein and the many ways he wreaked havoc on his people and especially the Kurds. Occasionally I would be invited to sit and hear of personal problems; but for the most part, morale was high and personal problems were few.

The commander of this team was a humble, conscientious and brilliant man named Colonel Forester. Colonel Forester was a big supporter of chaplain ministry and always made it a point to attend my abbreviated worship services. On about the third visit I made to this base camp Colonel Forester ask me if I'd be interested in seeing what his team does as it travels around Northern Iraq either by Toyota Land Cruiser or Blackhawk helicopter. Soon after accepting the offer, I found myself strapped into the seat of a Blackhawk flying low and fast above the barren Iraqi landscape. Following our landing on the outskirts of a Kurdish village,

security forces would post in strategic locations and once the area had been secured, the team leaders and I would walk into the village. Immediately, we were surrounded by children who were thrilled to see U.S. and Coalition forces visiting their city of a few thousand people, all living in clay houses and dressed in humble attire. As we walked to what we believed to be the city center we asked, via interpreter, to speak with the leaders of the community. Minutes later, we were sitting in the dirt, along with and across from eight to ten suspicious and yet welcoming Kurdish leaders. Though the purpose of our visit was to obtain necessary information for the State Department, information like birthrates, death rates, cleanliness of water, food supplies and security concerns, our meetings always began with introductions of team members. As Colonel Forester introduced his team, he wisely introduced me as the team's "holy man." Though the label "holy man" initially got a chuckle from my fellow teammates, the term resonated with our hosts. You see, they too had a "holy man" sitting in the circle. They were both surprised and impressed that our coalition carried with them a sense of the transcendent, a symbol of that which is holy. They did not expect a U.S. led coalition to carry with them a holy man. My being "at the table" crushed preconceived notions that Americans were little more than arrogant and Godless crusaders. Colonel Forester noted that the trust level of the Kurds skyrocketed with my presence. I seldom said a word during the formal portion of the meeting. But my being there, even as a Christian, non-verbally expressing my desire for the wellbeing of their Muslim village, created an atmosphere of trustful dialogue. Colonel Forester told me on several occasions that my presence set the conditions for a noticeably more successful visit.

As I've thought about and told this story over the past dozen years I've been surprised to hear how many other chaplains, Army, Navy, Marine Corps *and* Air Force, have had similar experiences. And the question echoes in my mind, *Is Religious Leader Engagement/Liaison*

(RLL) ministry one of the inherent competencies of the military chaplain? What if we were to be more intentional and train chaplains to do RLL and do it well? What if a fielded commander had at his disposal a chaplain with basic RLL skills to purposefully build meaningful and trusting relationships with local Imams and religious/community leaders? What if we were successful in establishing relationships with religious leaders and in so doing learned of the joys and fears of the community in which they live? What if we were to take these sensitivities back to our commanders and let them know of opportunities for them to prove to the locals that we have come to bring peace and stability to their village? What if chaplains, with Chaplain Assistants at their side, took a few hours a week to meet face to face with religious leaders for the sole purpose of build trusting relationships? These are but some of the questions that have haunted me as a result of my experience more than twelve years ago.

A great teacher once said, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall see God!” It is this chaplain’s opinion that if we were to assume the risks of RLL, recruit and train for excellence in this area of ministry and inform commanders of our competency, we will have contributed immeasurably to the mission success of the commanders for whom we work. Further, we would have commanders crying for more chaplains and Chaplain Assistants.

Since its inception, the Air Force Chaplain Corps has recruited, trained and sustained a ready force of professionals to minister to combatants and in so doing ready them for the battles they will fight in defense of our national interests. This largely Cold War model of ministry has served our nation well and many of its tenets must be held to tightly. But the long war we find ourselves in, a war all too often described and confused by religious innuendo, needs a chaplaincy willing to take calculated risks outside the wire to do what chaplains alone are

credentialed to do. For in sitting “holy man” with “holy man,” listening to and telling the stories of our respective communities, hearts and minds cannot help but be won.

The Global War on Terror (GWOT) will not be won with bombs and bullets. Further, our enemy has articulated this war in religiously-based innuendo. This non-kinetic, ecclesiastical domain is perfectly suited for uniformed clergy. Chaplains and their assistants are uniquely qualified to do what secular diplomats, Civil Affairs Teams and others cannot do—win and preserve peace through sacred association. GWOT is fertile ground for the engagement of the holy disciplines. HOWEVER, holding to our noncombatant status is essential. We are nothing if we lose this.

The following pages will briefly rehearse the history of the chaplaincy with a special focus on the noncombatant status of chaplains as per the Geneva Conventions. A brief examination of some of the reasons the U.S. Army Chaplaincy has delved into RLL will follow, along with a few of their success stories. Finally, legal and operational concerns will be addressed as they relate to the RLL ministry of military chaplains.

Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld has said, “Overall, we are not doing a good job...of trying to include religious leaders to show respect for their faith as part of stability operations.”¹ Secretary Rumsfeld is no longer working in the Department of Defense, but those of us who owe it to the American people and peace loving peoples around the globe to do everything we can to build trusting relationships that cannot help but lead to a more peaceful world.

¹ Donald Rumsfeld, keynote address, Eisenhower National Security Conference, Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center, Washington, DC, 25 September 2003.

Traditional Roles of Military Chaplains

An Historical Look at Chaplains

History is replete with evidence that religion has consistently been an essential dimension of human existence. Even more, in times of pain and tragedy, faith and the purveyors of that which is sacred have been given a front seat to the pages of history. War would be no exception. There is no known civilization that did not during the course of war seek favor from the gods and spiritual nourishment for combatants. The chaplaincy, it can be argued, has been alive and well either formally or informally for as long as man can imagine. The chaplaincy is as old as war itself.

Though the recorded history of the chaplaincy is buried in the mysteries of ancient religions, the theocratic government of ancient Israel is rich with examples of the role clergy played in the life of the military. Abram, Melchizedek, Moses and David all fought wars with a high priest at their side. The first clear example of God's instruction to military leaders as to the criticality of clergy accompanying militaries in times of war can be found in found in Deuteronomy 20:1-4. It reads:

When you go to war against your enemies and see horses and chariots and an army greater than yours, do not be afraid of them, because the LORD your God, who brought you up out of Egypt, will be with you. When you are about to go into battle, the priest shall come forward and address the army. He shall say: "Hear, O Israel, today you are going into battle against your enemies. Do not be fainthearted or afraid; do not be terrified or give way to panic before them. For the LORD your God is the one who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies to give you victory." (New International Version)

For centuries, Jews, Greeks and Romans ensured chaplains accompanied their armies to seek the guidance and protection of the Almighty. The term chaplains does not come into play

until the fourth century when, as legend has it, Martin of Tours offered half of his coat to a cold beggar who pleaded for assistance. That night, Martin saw Jesus Christ in a dream wearing the very half of his coat he earlier offered to the beggar. This affected Martin greatly and with his calling to the priesthood secure, the remaining half of his coat became an object of veneration. The “cappa” or coat became known by the French as a “Chappele” and the root of our word, Chapel. The priest in charge of the Chappele was called a Chappelain and later simply a chaplain.²

During the Council of Ratisbon (742 AD) and with much influence by St Boniface, the military chaplaincy got its official start. Clergy were authorized participation in and with military units though they were strictly prohibited from either carrying or using a weapon. At Ratisbon, St Boniface offered this direction to priests who would seek to serve in the military: “We prohibit the servant of God in every way from bearing arms or fighting in the army or going against the enemy....the leader may have with him one or two bishops with their priest chaplains, and each captain may have one priest, in order to hear the confessions of the men and impose upon them the proper penance.”³

The Revolutionary War cannot be understood apart from the influence of clergy, many of whom alternated between fighting and preaching for the very freedoms their faith required. In July of 1775 the Continental Congress officially established the chaplaincy. General Washington continuously pushed for the assignment of chaplains to individual regiments and even ordered that divine services be performed every Sunday at eleven o’clock. Officers were expected to lead by example by attending all scheduled worship services.⁴

² Jorgensen, Daniel B., *Air Force Chaplains – Volume I; The Service of Chaplains to Army Air Units, 1917-1946*. Office, Chief of Air Force Chaplains, p. 5.

³ Ibid. p. 5.

⁴ Ibid. p. 6.

The Revolution led to many changes in the way our fledgling democracy would be ordered, including the notion that is commonly referred to as the separation of church and state. This separation led the chaplaincy to become a cooperative fraternity of various Christian faith groups where participation was voluntary and inclusive.

The American Civil War pitted North and South against one another, each with clergy leading prayer services imploring victory over the other. In addition,

Administrative features of the chaplain program were enhanced by Federal legislation. The Statutes of 22 July 1861 stated: ‘That there shall be allowed to each regiment one chaplain, who shall be appointed by the regimental commander.... The chaplain so appointed must be a regular ordained minister of a Christian denomination and shall receive the pay and allowances of a captain....’⁵

Later, in May of 1862, Jewish chaplains were officially recognized. In August of 1864, at the Geneva Conference, chaplains were afforded noncombatant status. The policy stated in part, “Persons employed in hospitals and ambulances... as well as chaplains, shall participate in the benefit of neutrality....”⁶

Given that much of the fighting force on both sides of the divide during the Civil War were illiterate, chaplains acted as teachers and mentors as they were often the most educated man in the regiment. This duty often led to the teaching of the scriptures as reading text, which seemed to bother no one. A Confederate soldier once said of his chaplain, Robert F. Bunting, that he is “a fine scholar, a fine mind, an eloquent preacher. Above all he understands the world, and readily adapts himself to the ways of his parishioners, without soiling his own garments.”⁷

Chaplain Bunting’s presence with the troops was incalculable. He later would report “We hold three services daily. All are well attended and with much seriousness and attention. A very

⁵ Ibid. p. 7.

⁶ Ibid. p. 8.

⁷ Edited by Thomas W. Cutrer, *Our Trust Is in the God of Battles; Civil War Letters of Robert Franklin Bunting, Chaplain, Terry’s Texas Rangers, C.S.A.*, The University of Tennessee Press, Knoxville, 2006, p. xxv.

marked change has come over the regiment. Everywhere you see evidence of God's presence and power. The entire encampment has felt the sacred influence."⁸

One of the enduring characteristics of chaplain exemplars is the ability to not only serve up spiritual refreshment for the troops to whom one is assigned, but also care for oneself.

Another Civil War chaplain, Father James B. Sheeran, C.S.S.R. of the 14th Louisiana, C.S.A., wrote in his diary following a day of unspeakable bloodshed, hearing both the cries of victory and the lamentations of the wounded of,

...I found myself that night not on the wearying march, not in the tented camp, not on the gory field of battle, not in the hospital listening to the suppressed moans of bleeding patients. Oh no! Once more I found myself within the peaceful walls of a convent. Before me was the image of my crucified Savior, near me was that of His Immaculate Mother. These and other pious objects recalled to my mind my peaceful cell in New Orleans and, had I wings, quickly would I have flown to it, there to shelter myself at least for a time from the scenes of bloody strife....⁹

The life of a Civil War chaplain was filled with consoling the wounded, hearing the concerns and confessions of the soldiers as well leading worship and attending to the burial of the fallen. Another critical dimension of a chaplain's cache of ministrations was that of advising leadership and more specifically, telling "the old man" the truth, even when he didn't want to hear it. Father Sheehan took seriously his role of advising even the generals and made it his duty to uphold the moral decency of the rank and file soldier as well as the leadership. He recounts on July 23, 1864,

This day I was very much grieved at the profanity of officers visiting headquarters. I made an effort to check it. They apologized but the next moment committed the same fault. I resolved to quit the command and that night took General York to one side to tell him of my intention. It came upon him like a thunder clap. He begged me to reconsider the matter and not to quit the command after being so long with it. He told me not to mind such and such ones (referring to those whom I had rebuked for cursing). 'General,' said I, 'I don't blame them so much for I cannot expect much better of them. But I blame

⁸ Ibid, p. 189

⁹ Edited by Rev. Joseph T. Durkin, S.J., Confederate Chaplain; A War Journal of Rev. James B. Sheeran, c.s.s.r., 14th Louisiana, C.S.A., The Bruce Publishing Company, Milwaukee, 1960, p. 28.

you for you are worse than they are.’ ‘Well,’ said he, ‘Father, if you consent to remain with us, you will never hear another profane word from me.’ ...I consented to remain, and I never since heard a profane word from the general.¹⁰

Unfortunately, not all chaplains attained the moral excellence expected of clergy in uniform. Steven Woodworth writes in his book, *While God is Marching On* that any number of Civil War chaplains failed in winning the respect of soldiers and in doing so, failed to provide the units they were assigned to the kind of spiritual and moral leadership they were so very desperate for. He writes, “The stories of substandard chaplains were legion in the Civil War armies. The Fifth Massachusetts’s Lt Col Edwin Bennett estimated that ‘at least seventy-five per cent of the chaplains commissioned during the first year of the war were practically unfit for their work.’”¹¹ Woodworth quickly refutes this estimate as being far too high, yet claims that there were more than a few Civil War chaplains who appear to have been unsuccessful at gaining employment elsewhere and decided to become a chaplain.¹²

Even more damaging was the critique of President Lincoln himself. Woodworth summarizes Lincoln’s sentiments concerning chaplain failures in saying, “Lincoln himself, who took an intense interest in the chaplaincy, expressed dismay that so many of the chaplains seemed to be more interested in their own rank, privileges, and prestige than in the souls of their men.”¹³ Unfortunately, most of the chaplains that would have made their way to Washington and brought to the attention of the President were the chaplains with the most to complain about.

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 97.

¹¹ Steven E. Woodworth, *While God is Marching On; The Religious World of Civil War Soldiers*. University Press of Kansas, 2001, pp 149-150.

¹² Ibid. p. 150.

¹³ Ibid. p. 152.

Lincoln would have had little opportunity to hear first hand of the diligent and faithful ministries of fielded chaplains, tirelessly caring for the souls of men.¹⁴

During WWI and WWII, chaplains settled into an organizational structure not unlike the present. Training programs and schools were developed as were required reports that spoke to the chaplain's monthly activities. Pastoral duties included leading worship, counseling, and visitation in barracks, workplaces and hospitals. An additional duty that emerged as early as 1920 is that of public relations. "Effecting cordial relations with local clergymen and churches was an important and satisfying aspect of the chaplain's program."¹⁵ Though this public relations function was confined primarily to the task of hosting clergy luncheons and assisting with local charities and welfare organizations, the door is at least cracked open for chaplains to affect the environment of not just the troops they serve, but those "outside the fence" as well. As chaplains exposed themselves to serving as ambassadors of the military and their government, through face to face contact with clergy and communities unfamiliar with the military as well as by writing articles for local newspapers and appearing on radio, there was a noted increase of acceptance by the local public of previously unpopular programs like the Selective Service. "An Army concerned with the morals and morale of its members enough to have an effective chaplain service could not be as bad as the radicals painted."¹⁶

History is replete with examples of chaplains making a difference, on both sides of the military and civilian divide. During the Korean conflict many chaplains took upon themselves the care of orphans. Navy Chaplain Edwin Weider reported that "3 UNCACK (UN Civil Assistance Commission, Korea) and 1 Catholic orphanage with a total of over 250 children

¹⁴ Warren B. Armstrong, *For Courageous Fighting and Confident Dying: Union Chaplains in the Civil War*. Lawrence University Press of Kansas, 1998. p. 4.

¹⁵ Jorgensen, p. 71.

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 72.

depend on us for fuel, clothing, and food. The chaplains serve as liaison between the Air Group and the UNCACK and civil relief personnel in making assistance available where most needed.”¹⁷ The war in Vietnam witnessed the formation of orphanages and other humanitarian works by chaplains. Chaplain Calvin J. Croston led a humanitarian assistance program by distributing Project Handclasp materials delivered by Navy ships. He notes that materials were being distributed “all over the country to schools, orphanages, leper colonies, military and civilian hospitals, missions, and district penal confinement centers.”¹⁸ Chaplain Croston viewed his efforts among the Vietnamese people “as a strategic medium for helping to help themselves.”¹⁹

Many innocent peoples caught in DESERT STORM, IRAQI FREEDOM and ENDURING FREEDOM, have been blessed by chaplains leading the effort to reach out and assist local populations. In leading with the collection of food and clothing, chaplains led the charge in wining countless hearts in minds. I personally led an effort that collected sixty-five tons of stuffed toys and small candy items at Rhein-Main Germany in 1993. These items were enclosed in gallon sized zip-lock bags by some 400 volunteers and then air-dropped by C-130s over Bosnia-Herzegovina in an effort to give war-torn children a little joy in an effort we called Operation PROVIDE SANTA. The program was endorsed and praised by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, CNN, and Good Morning America. Vice President Al Gore came to Rhein-Main Air Base, with stuffed toys that his children donated, to officially launch Operation PROVIDE SANTA. We demonstrated on the world stage that the U.S. military is not

¹⁷ U.S. Navy, *The History of the Chaplains Corps, United States Navy*, vol. 6 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1960), 130.

¹⁸ Withers M. Moore, Herbert L. Bergsma, and Timothy J. Demy, *Chaplains with U.S. Naval Units in Vietnam, 1954–1975: Selected Experience at Sea and Ashore* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Navy, Office of the Chief of Chaplains, Historical Branch, 1985), 20.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

just about “breaking things and killing people.” For as we used to say in Strategic Air Command, “Peace is our Profession.”

Indeed, chaplains nurture the living, comfort the wounded and honor the dead. There is no higher calling. But nowhere in the historic legacy of uniformed clergy can one find a time in which chaplains were not involved in peacemaking and humanitarian interventions with precious souls on both sides of the battle lines.

Non-Combatant Status

The Air Force Chaplaincy has long touted the virtues of a pastoral presence in the United States military. From its uniformed pastors and partnered with the able support of Chaplain Assistants, Air Force members and their families are assured the Free Exercise of religion no matter where they are assigned. Indeed, this assurance of Free Exercise extends to times of peace and times of war. Chaplains provide and defend this essential human right to all military members without prejudice. Further, chaplains, as do all members of the military, raise their right hand and swear to both “support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic.” This promise, made before God and Country, has not been upheld without pain, anguish and sometimes even death. There have been countless exemplars of selfless service and heroic ministry for chaplains to emulate and the American people to expect.

Chaplains, under the Law of Armed Conflict (LOAC), are considered non-combatants. As such, chaplains are not permitted to engage in offensive hostilities in any way. Chaplain ministry is to focus on the religious and moral support of combatants and their families as well as the advising of leadership with regards to spiritual, moral and ethical concerns. This is a noble and high calling and one must never underestimate the value of these skill sets rightly

employed—especially in times of war. These core competencies, when propagated by faithful clergy of varying faiths, make significant contributions to the competence of warriors.

Throughout the history of war, men have generally agreed that it is in everyone's best interest to "treat certain people, property and places exempt from armed conflict."²⁰ At the Council of Ratisbon chaplains were first authorized to serve in times of war but were clearly instructed to do so as noncombatants as they were prohibited from carry weapons. Chaplain William Emerson, for many the "father" of the chaplaincy, distinguished himself during the American Revolutionary War as having made the personal choice of ministering without a sidearm even as many of his peers elected to arm themselves. The Continental Congress officially recognized chaplains with military status and pay on July 29, 1775. But it was not until 1863 that Francis Lieber first penned a code of conduct for armed conflict.²¹ While these laws were primarily the moral property of the United States of America, many other countries adopted these as their own. Lieber's "rules were instrumental in developing the Hague Conventions on land warfare in 1899 and 1907."²²

So convinced was much of the world of the necessity of laws of war, we find that at nearly the same time of Lieber's work was a man named Henry Dunant, writing and submitting similar laws of warfare. Having witnessed up close the horrors of war at the Battle of Solferino in 1859, Dunant led in the formation of the Red Cross.²³ He was also a key author of the first Geneva Convention in 1864. Dunant's specific focus in the first Geneva Convention concerned the special status due the sick and wounded, those held prisoners of war and all noncombatants

²⁰ Law of Armed Conflict Lecture, MS-1C, given at the Judge Advocate General School House, Maxwell AFB, AL., in January 2000. p. 1.

²¹ Dietrich Schindler and Jiri Toman. *The Laws of Armed Conflicts: A Collection of Conventions, Resolutions and Other Documents*. 3rd ed. Henry Dunant Institute, Geneva, 1988. p. 1.

²² Law of Armed Conflict Lecture, MS-1C, p. 1.

²³ W. Michael Reisman and Chris T. Antoniou. *The Laws of War*. Vintage Books, New York, 1994.

during times of war.²⁴ Though the Geneva Conventions underwent revisions in 1906 and 1929, World War II demonstrated that the Conventions were not yet as strong as they needed to be as nations were still doing whatever they deemed necessary to achieve victory. Thus, the Geneva Conventions were greatly strengthened in 1949 and this revision remains today the basis of our laws for armed conflict. Though these laws are enforceable only against nations that have signed them, “they are considered in large part to be customary international law to be binding on all nations.”²⁵

Medical and religious personnel, in exchange for their combatant status, are considered humanitarians in and around combatant forces. As such, medical and religious personnel are permitted to care for the sick and wounded and provide spiritual care to combatants. Medical personnel have traditionally carried small arms for self-protection and for the protection of their patients but chaplains are not authorized to carry weapons under any circumstance. If either medical or religious personnel are captured by the enemy, neither are to be considered prisoners of war but are to be referred to as “retained persons” and should only be “retained” so long as their services are deemed necessary.²⁶

At present, all three Chief’s of Chaplains have produced clear guidance to chaplains that they may not carry a weapon under any circumstance nor may they engage in any activity that could jeopardize their noncombatant status.

That said, the men and women whose names have been etched into the annals of history as the most outstanding uniformed clergy, were those who stepped beyond the line of comfort and into a world of uncertainty, challenge and often great suffering. These are not men and women who did so seeking to make a name for themselves, win another ribbon or promotion, but

²⁴ Law of Armed Conflict Lecture, MS-1C, p. 2.

²⁵ Ibid. p. 4.

²⁶ Geneva Convention for the Amelioration of the Wounded and Sick, Article 28.

did so having seen a need and stood when others were content to remain seated. Their prayer was simple, “Here am I, Lord, send me.”

A Hero in Faith

The great chaplains of our nation’s history will be remembered for lots of things; but never for playing it safe. Names like “Timothy Dwight, grandson of Jonathan Edwards and Revolutionary War chaplain; E. M. Bounds, the famed theologian who served as a Confederate Army chaplain; George Fox, one of the ‘Immortal Chaplains’ of the U.S.A.T. Dorchester; and Robert Preston Taylor, who willingly suffered with his men in a Japanese prison camp.”²⁷ These are the servants of God and country we look to for inspiration. These are the kinds of chaplains to whom America owes its greatest debt.

Looking at the Air Force Chaplain “Hall of Fame,” no name rings louder than that of Chaplain Robert Preston Taylor. Born in Henderson, Texas, in 1909, he graduated from Baylor University in 1933 and Southwestern Baptist Seminary in 1936. His studies continued as he earned a Doctor of Theology from Southwestern in 1939. Chaplain Taylor began his service as a chaplain in 1940 with his first duty being at Barksdale Field, Louisiana. From there he accepted assignment as the regimental chaplain of the 31st Infantry Regiment, an assignment that would not only change the course of his life, but illustrate for many Jesus’ admonition that “Whoever wants to be first must take last place and be the servant of everyone else.” (Mark 9:35) Not only did he exemplify the biblical mandate of selfless service, but he epitomized forever the meaning of extraordinary military ministry as a chaplain.

²⁷ John Riddle, *For God and Country: Four Stories of Courageous Military Chaplains*, Barbour Paperback, 2003.

Chaplain Taylor arrived in Manila in May 1941 as the only chaplain assigned to the famed Cuartel de Espano in Manila. Upon the declaration of war, he was transferred to the front lines on the Peninsula of Bataan. There Chaplain Taylor would earn the Silver Star for his faithful gallantry in the Battle of Bataan.²⁸ The sole biographer of Chaplain Taylor's life, Billy Keith, says in his book, *Days of Anguish, Days of Hope*, "When the Japanese threatened to overrun the entire defensive perimeter around Bataan and Corregidor, many Filipinos left their homes to escape the onslaught. Refugees poured into the American lines. In most cases, the chaplains were the only support the refugees had, as civil authority quickly disintegrated."²⁹

With the surrender of American forces, Chaplain Taylor became a participant in the "Death March." He earned fourteen weeks of solitary confinement for stepping outside the realm of safety and smuggling food and medicine to prisoners of war that were deathly ill. Chaplain Taylor was threatened with death. His confinement entailed fourteen weeks in a heat-box, a small cage infested with rats and insects set in the blazing sun. Nearly dead, Chaplain Taylor was moved to a hospital to die. To the surprise of many, he recovered.

He is said to have touched the lives of 10,000 patients in the camp hospital. From there he was transferred to Japan and Manchuria via one of the famous "hellships" at which time his ship was mistakenly the target of American bombing costing more than a thousand of his comrades to lose their lives. He himself was wounded in these raids but never received a Purple Heart due to the fact that his wounds were the result of friendly fire.

Following 42 months as a prisoner of war, he boarded the U.S.S. Marine Shark and for the next 23 days enjoyed eating, sleeping and conversing with those he had been imprisoned with

²⁸ Leslie Zimmerman, *Chaplain Prisoners of War In the Pacific, 1941-45*, U.S. Air Force Chaplain Service Institute, Maxwell AFB, Alabama, 1993.

²⁹ Billy Keith, *Days of Anguish, Days of Hope*. Scripta Publishing, Fort Worth, TX, 1991.

the past several years. All throughout the trip one thought filled his heart and mind; how good it will be to finally have his wife Ione in his arms once again.

On November 1st, 1945, they sailed into San Francisco Bay and there waiting for him was Ione. He threw his arms around her and rather than responding with similar joy, she pulled back and stood away from him. That's when she confessed she had remarried a month earlier. She explained that she had waited faithfully for nearly four years with no indication of his status, until one day, about a year earlier, she received word from a fellow POW that Preston had died on one of the ships to Japan.

After much soul searching, Chaplain Taylor decided to continue his uniformed ministry. He took several assignments culminating in his selection on August 16, 1962, as the Air Force Chief of Chaplains in the grade of Major General.

Chaplains are, by definition, noncombatants. Yet in the Pacific Theater alone, more than 20 chaplains were killed by enemy fire while doing what they were called to do. Though Chaplain Taylor survived the Second World War with his life, his selfless service created a lasting paradigm for anyone seeking to support and defend the Constitution of the United States as a chaplain. His strategic leadership has demonstrated to all who would pin a religious symbol onto a military uniform that safety, security and comfort are not the pathways to extraordinary military ministry. LOAC may very well categorize chaplains as noncombatants, but chaplains must be willing to live and serve sacrificially, as did Chaplain Taylor. He, in being faithful to his calling as a uniformed pastor, knew that accepting this call to service might very well cost him his life. Any chaplain unwilling to serve in the dangerous trenches of war or answer the call of his/her commander to intercede with foreign religious leaders and in so doing contribute to national interests as only chaplains can, need not leave the honorable pastorate on Main Street

USA. To transition from civilian clergy to chaplain is to say my comfort, my safety and my sanctuary are no longer civilian in nature. They rest in following a calling that may well culminate in the horrors of warfare. Chaplain Taylor's life, example and ministry personify the costs and joys of chaplain service.

Upon his retirement in 1966, Chaplain Taylor returned to Texas continuing to serve the nation he loved dearly. John L. Frisbee, in his article, *Valor: Heroic Noncombatants*, summarizes Chaplain Taylor's life in this way; "Throughout his years that were marked by the horrors of war and by great personal suffering, he never lost the faith that sustained him and that he engendered in those whose lives he touched. He and the many chaplains who have devoted their lives to the service of others are a part of the Air Force tradition of valor."³⁰

Speaking to a group of Chaplain Candidates, Chaplain, Brigadier General Jim Spivey, USA, referenced Chaplain Taylor's leadership as a model for all to follow. Chaplain Spivey concluded his remarks in saying, "God expects nothing less from you. Our nation depends on your being faithful to this same call, to nurture, to care for and to honor those that you serve." Spivey concluded in saying, "He understood what it meant to be a leader...even to the point of risking his own life."³¹

Chaplain Preston Taylor's life is an historical definition of what it means to fully accept the call to the military chaplaincy. His example of selfless devotion is as pertinent today as ever. He courageously took the necessary risks to be an inspiration to others and an exemplar of faith. The world will not know, this side of heaven, the extent to which his life contributed to the causes of freedom, both temporally and eternally.

³⁰ John L. Frisbee, *Valor: Heroic Noncombatants*. airforce-magazine.com, Vol. 81, No. 1, January, 1998.

³¹ John R. Bumgarner, *Parade of the Dead: A U.S. Army Physician's Memoir of Imprisonment by the Japanese, 1942-194*. McFarland, 2004

Army Chaplains as Religious Liaisons

Driving Factors

The significant driving factors leading the United States Army Chaplaincy to conduct Religious Leader Liaison (RLL) activities is at once a simple and complex issue. On one hand, commanders have discovered that their chaplains alone have the necessary credentials and training to engage with local religious leaders in ways others cannot. On yet another level, the 2006 National Security Strategy clearly states that “while the War on Terror is a battle of ideas, it is not a battle of religions.”³² GWOT is a battle of ideas that is very often couched in and confused by religious ideals. The U.S. Army discovered that no one is more qualified to sort through these complexities than their chaplains. They also discovered that engaging with local religious leaders in Iraq, Afghanistan the Horn of Africa and anywhere chaplains deploy, simply makes sense while paying significant peace dividends.

There is a sense in which this evolving mission has been tainted with anonymity. Having interviewed several Army Chaplains and in each case asking who the “father” of RLL is in the Army, I continually left the conversation wanting. Several asked me to not quote them nor reveal the source of the information they shared with me. I suspect that in large measure, the practice of RLL has gotten out in front of both the Army’s formal training and doctrine. The margins are being tested. Lessons are being learned and mistakes are being made in the field. RLL is largely being done by trial and error with an enormous amount of trust being instilled into fielded chaplains. The practice of RLL is on one hand a clearly embraced practice as stated in Joint

³² *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington DC: The White House, March 2006), found at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss/2006>.

Doctrine JP 1-05 but at the same time is testing the left and right limits of chaplain ministry. It is also putting chaplains and Chaplain Assistants at a greater risk than we have grown accustomed to by being unarmed³³ and surrounded by an unknown audience.

The risks are multifaceted. They include the obvious risk of placing a chaplain and his or her assistant in a community setting in which they have little or no protection from would be attackers. Unarmed chaplains are becoming as vulnerable as they can be to those who see only an American uniform. Further, risks include the subtle line between faithfulness to a local community and the national objectives of the U.S. military. Chaplains will no doubt hear and see things that would be of great importance to intelligence gatherers. The risk of even being perceived as an informant or HUMINT source is enormous. There is little room for error and the consequences of a chaplain violating the trust of a religious leader could have ramifications not unlike the atrocities of Abu Ghraib.

The reason Army chaplains have stepped up to the challenge of RLL, despite the very real security concerns, is that chaplains in the course of following their Title 10 responsibilities in war-torn areas around the globe could not help from being agents of compassion and hope. They increasingly found themselves interacting with local leaders, trying to make a difference by winning hearts and minds simply by being agents of faith and responsible to their calling. They often did this disbursing clothing and foodstuffs collected by soldiers. Many of these sporadic and rather impulsive humanitarian actions were followed by a customary gesture of gratitude on the part of the receiving community. Muslims, in particular, are enormously appreciative of any indication that American soldiers care for the wellbeing of their community and are willing to demonstrate that care in tangible ways. In many cases, chaplains were the recipients of local

³³ Note: Chaplain Assistants are combatants and carry weapons, though would be of little or no contest to an ambush of dissidents.

hospitality and in doing so, learned much about the culture in which they found themselves. By simply taking the time to allow local leaders, often religious leaders, to show appreciation, chaplains learned many of the nuances of the communities to which they were deployed. Chaplains discovered, as did Greg Mortenson as told in his book, *Three Cups of Tea*, that "The first cup of tea, you're a stranger; the second cup, a friend; and the third cup you're family."³⁴

Chaplains, in simply taking the time to respect the generosity of local clerics and civic leaders discovered that within these informal meetings two powerful outcomes emerged. First, chaplains discovered that there is no better way to come to appreciate the intricacies of the religiously potent culture they were in. A whole new level of appreciation emerged and along with it came a higher degree of trust in the American soldier from the locals. Second, chaplains were able to dispel stereotypes and myths that were fueling hatred among the locals. Chaplains were able to address some of the misinformation that was being disseminated within the local communities in which soldiers were deployed. The result is that chaplains were able to build bridges of trust and crush many of the rumors and well distributed myths like the popular belief that Americans are nothing but disrespectful infidels and nonbelievers.

The genesis of contemporary RLL is in part linked to the work of Samuel P. Huntington and his book, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. In his book, he reminds his readers that unlike in the Western world, clergy in the Middle East wield enormous amounts of influence. This influence is even stronger and more pronounced in areas in which governments are weak and civilization is most fragile.³⁵ Little by little the drum beat of religion and its importance began to be heard in a country that prides itself on cautiously avoiding the mix of religion and policy. This forbidden subject, in response to the challenges of GWOT, made

³⁴ Greg Mortenson, *Three Cups of Tea*. Penguin, 2007.

³⁵ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1996, pp. 109-115.

it to the inner circles of our security strategy. And in the wake of September 11th, 2001, as the visions of crumbling twin towers and a burning Pentagon were still fresh in our minds, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld stepped to the microphone and said, “Overall we are not doing a good job...of trying to include religious leaders to show respect for their faith as part of stability operations.”³⁶

In the 2005 Air University Cadre Paper entitled, *Military Chaplains as Peace Builders*, the authors continue to unveil recent and bold discoveries of scholars who have made the link between stability operations and chaplains as religious liaisons. They report:

In his book, *Faith Based Diplomacy: Trumping Realpolitik*, Dr. Douglas Johnson advocates the use of military chaplains in stability operations. He states that the multifaceted experience and extensive interpersonal skills military chaplains possess are attributes perfectly suited for the inclusion of religion into stability operations. Dr Johnson... further states... “We neglect Religion at Our Peril,” that military chaplains can develop in-depth understanding of the religious and cultural distinctions in a given environment through their personal interactions with indigenous religious communities.³⁷

This serendipitous mission, one that, as far as I can tell, no one really scripted or planned for, has become for the U.S. Army chaplaincy a pillar of mission effectiveness.

Contemporary Success Stories

Chaplain George Adams, a U.S. Navy chaplain, explains in his paper, *Chaplains as Liaisons with Religious Leaders: Lessons from Iraq and Afghanistan*, that there were numerous times in which chaplains quelled frustration among the local Iraqi populous during Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). Early in OIF, Marines from the 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, had taken a school in Nasiriyah. During the fight, the Fedayeen had taken several local Iraqis and used them

³⁶ Donald Rumsfeld, Keynote address, Eisenhower National Security Conference, Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center, Washington, DC, 25 September 2003.

³⁷ William Sean Lee, Christopher J. Burke, Zonna M. Crayne, *Military Chaplains as Peace Builders; Embracing Indigenous Religions in Stability Operations*. Air University Press, 2005, p. 13.

as human shields. Once hostilities had ceased, local Iraqis were incensed at the way U.S. Marines had killed several of their own. The commander, Lieutenant Colonel Paul Dunahoe, told his chaplain, Chaplain Brian Waite to try and settle the people down. Chaplain Waite managed to contact the community leaders and through a translator, managed to convince the locals that Marines had not intentionally killed their family members but that the Fedayeen had used them as shields. Knowing the Islamic requirement of burial prior to sunset, Chaplain Waite coordinated the burial and even helped dig the graves, a gesture that spoke to the character of the U.S. military and dispelled countless rumors. Chaplain Adams writes,

This example is only one of many in Iraq and Afghanistan that demonstrate how chaplains acted as liaisons between the U.S. military and the civilian population. Chaplains communicated with local spiritual leaders, established religious councils, coordinated mosque renovation projects, improved trust, dispelled stereotypes, organized and celebrated community religious services, and even trained an Afghanistan Security Force (ASF) soldier as a chaplain.³⁸

Chaplain Adams then proceeds to catalog fourteen specific instances in which chaplains made significant contributions to the mission objectives in a way that only chaplains could. Early in OIF and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), chaplains were recognized as officers uniquely qualified to address many cultural ideals. Chaplains, as religiously astute fellow members of the clergy, were able to make huge contributions by informing their commanders of essential information that they quite frankly, would not have gotten any other way. Chaplains forged trusting relationships and even led activities that brought community leaders together with military leaders in an effort to gain essential confidence from the locals.

Once this trust had been established, amazing things began to happen. Chaplain Adams writes:

³⁸ George Adams, CDR, CHC, USN, Chaplains as Liaisons with Religious Leaders; *Lessons from Iraq and Afghanistan*. Peaceworks No. 56. 2006, p. 6.

In Iraq, civilians occasionally came to chaplains with crucial intelligence. In one case, a local man in Mosul approached Chaplain Stutz (deployed in Iraqi from March 2003 to February 2004), the 101st Airborne Division CMOC chaplain, with what he claimed was information about the location of Saddam Hussein's two sons. Chaplain Stutz handled the situation by taking the individual to the division's G-2 shop, which is responsible for intelligence. By taking this action, he avoided acting as a "middleman" between the information source and the G-2. In most of these types of situations, chaplains arranged for individuals with information to talk directly to the "2 shop," thereby preserving an explicit distinction between the chaplain and intelligence collection.³⁹

This particular situation highlights the need for Religious Support Team (RST) training and clear doctrine that protects the chaplain from crossing the noncombatant line.

On another occasion, an Army chaplain provided critical information to his commander that led to a tangible expression of respect of the Iraqi people. Chaplain Adams recounts:

In one particular effort, Chaplain Adams-Thompson worked through a PRT commander to set up a luncheon at a local restaurant between chaplains and mullahs in Kapisa Province. During the meeting, the chaplains asked the mullahs what they thought about the impact of all the outside actors that have been in Afghanistan.... The mullah in charge of education for the province said they were pleased that the United States was helping further education in the country. He appreciated all of the schools the United States was building for Afghanistan, because in order for the nation to move forward, their education infrastructure had to be improved. He added, however, that since the United States was only constructing public schools and not madrassas, which are traditional Islamic schools, the impression persisted that the United States was more concerned with secular than religious education. The mullah said that over the years all of the madrassa structures had been destroyed and the religious schools were meeting primarily in tents. So if the United States would construct some madrassas, even on a ratio of one-to-ten to public schools, a powerful message would be sent to the population that the United States cared about the Afghan people—their religion and culture. The chaplain took that information back to his commander.⁴⁰

Chaplain Adams also addresses the way in which chaplains are in a unique position to interact with indigenous religious leaders. He cites one example in which a Shiite cleric refused to speak with the Civil Affairs team and instead, demanded that his interaction with U.S. military be done though and with a chaplain. Adams writes:

³⁹ Ibid. p. 16.

⁴⁰ Ibid. p. 17.

A distinct implication of this notion is that when the military needs to engage local religious leaders, chaplains are the natural choice to fill this role. This dynamic was demonstrated during Operation Iraqi Freedom, when the 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, entered An Numaniyah, a city of 350,000. Members of a Civil Affairs Group (CAG) met with the city's civic leaders, but the leading Shiite cleric in the city made it clear that he preferred to meet with a religious figure whom he could view as his counterpart. The Shiite cleric's life experience was that religious leaders had the real authority and influence in the community.⁴¹

The train has left the station. Commanders have increasingly seen the value of chaplains engaging with religious leaders, especially mid-level leaders, in Areas of Operation all over the globe. The question is not *will* chaplains be religious liaisons but *how will we do this* and learn from one another along the way. How will we train and even recruit chaplains in the future? Are there chaplains, as some suppose, that are not suited for RLL? How do we accredit and assign the right chaplains to this task? Maybe, just maybe, the joining of our chaplain schoolhouses in the summer of 2009 is part of God's "yes" to the critical role of chaplains as RLLs.

⁴¹ Ibid. pp. 19-20.

Additional Issues and Concerns

Legal Issues

One of the central issues that will need to be addressed from the legal perspective will be that of noncombatant status protection. Indeed, military lawyers will need to be involved in the development of training syllabi and advisement in the field so as to protect chaplains from endangering the central tenets of the Geneva Conventions and the humanitarian roles and privileges that it affords chaplains. Chaplains will need to seek the advice of military lawyers as the need arises; a practice that senior chaplains have become well acquainted with. In no way can RLL proceed apart from the oversight of the legal staff. Since given doctrine mandates that all RLL be the result of commander's initiation, it will often be the commander who will seek legal advice on behalf of the chaplain before sending his or her chaplain into a liaison activity.

One of the dangers that chaplains will face, whether real or perceived, is what the legal community calls perfidy. Perfidy, or treacherous acts, "involve misuse of internationally recognized symbols or status to take unfair advantage of the enemy, such as false surrenders, placing anti-aircraft weapons in hospitals, and misuse of the red cross, red diamond, or the red crescent."⁴² The use of chaplains to perform any military action other than those deemed to be clearly chaplain functions and humanitarian in nature would be a violation of long standing rules of war as well as an abuse of the noncombatant status of a chaplain.

The publication of Department of Defense Directive 3000.5 has dramatically changed the scope of activities and range of expertise expected of the U.S. military. Though chaplains are not

⁴² The Military Commander and the Law, Ninth Edition, 2008, p. 630.

specifically mentioned in this doctrine, it is clear that the expanded challenge of stability operations belongs to any and all career fields able to shape the environment of the Area of Operations. As 4.1 explicitly states, stability operations are now on par with combat operations.

4.1. Stability operations are a core U.S. military mission that the Department of Defense shall be prepared to conduct and support. They shall be given priority comparable to combat operations and be explicitly addressed and integrated across all DoD activities including doctrine, organizations, training, education, exercises, materiel, leadership, personnel, facilities, and planning.⁴³

For the U.S. Army, this directive is further explained in FM 3-0 (February 2008), Operations. Master Sergeant John W. Proctor of the 19th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) states in his paper, *Enlisted Support to the Religious Analysis Process*, that this doctrine does two critical things to the way warfighters approach their mission.

This doctrine... places offensive, defensive and stability operations on equal footing and identifies warfare “among the people” as the new norm. This new doctrine also places the commander at the center of the military decision making process (MDMP) and emphasizes analysis rather than process as the primary vehicle for staffs supporting battle command in the COE (Course of Action).⁴⁴

As mentioned previously, Defense Directive 3000.5 does not specifically mention chaplains but it does give great focus on humanitarian operations. International Law and the Geneva Conventions themselves make the case that chaplains, as noncombatants, exist in the military precisely as agents of humanitarian action. Thus, the expanded mandate given in Defense Directive 3000.5 must be assumed to include chaplains, if not on the forefront of the intent, at a minimum as leading supporters.

All this is stated to prop up the case that chaplain/legal interface will be as essential as ever. Chaplains will not only need to be in careful dialogue with legal counsel while deployed, but will

⁴³ DoDD 3000.5 "Military Support for Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction (SSTR) Operations", November 28, 2005

⁴⁴ John W. Proctor, *Enlisted Support to the Religious Analysis Process*

need to associate closely with military legal experts in developing training syllabi and future doctrine that, as carefully as possible, delineates the left and right limits of RLL.

Though chaplains will presumably lean more heavily on legal counsel as the way ahead for RLL is established, our nation's vital interests are too closely linked to chaplain success in RLL. Chaplain leadership must be careful to not see potential legal quagmires as a legitimate reason to shy away from this essential ministry frontier.

Operational Issues

The twentieth century Chinese military master mind, Mao Zedong, believed that “Weapons are an important factor in war, but not the decisive factor; it is people, not things, that are decisive.”⁴⁵ As if America is rediscovering this ancient truth, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates spoke in a similar manner. In a recent speech at the U.S. Global Leadership Campaign, Secretary Gates addressed the role of diplomacy both during the Cold War and in the present. He said,

Looking back, it is clear that the strength of America's military forces and intelligence capabilities – along with the willingness to use them – held the Soviets at bay for more than four decades. But there was another side to that story and to that struggle. There was the Agency for International Development overseeing development and humanitarian assistance programs that improved – if not saved – the lives of millions of people from disease, starvation, and poverty. Our diplomats forged relationships and bonds of trust.... These tools of persuasion and inspiration – were indispensable to the outcome of the defining ideological struggle of the 20th century. I believe that they are just as indispensable in the 21st century – and maybe more so.⁴⁶

Secretary Gates makes it clear that the “tools of persuasion and inspiration” were indispensable during the Cold War and may very well be of greater import during the present age of Peace Operations.

⁴⁵ Selected Military Writings of Mao Tse-Tung, chapter IX, 1967, para 48.

⁴⁶ Robert M. Gates, Secretary of Defense, Washington, D.C. , July 15, 2008

In a similar vein, John MacKinlay says “In the future, winning ‘hearts and minds’ or what John MacKinlay calls the virtual dimension, may be the most dominant portion of the battlespace.”⁴⁷ It is the winning of hearts and minds that is at the core of RLL.

Indeed, winning hearts and minds is a core competency of the Chaplains Service. Chaplains are trained to shape and influence individuals, families, units and military communities. Chaplains lead and facilitate worship; they encourage healthy community and family life. And when necessary, they comfort the hurting and honor the dead. Chaplains do this and much, much more, while walking a fine line of commitment to both the military and the religious body from which they receive their endorsement. Being a noncombatant in a combatant world calls for more than just a little diplomacy and care. It is to some a most egregious hypocrisy. To those who have been on the receiving end of a chaplain’s care, it is a beautiful dance that has become an essential element of our military institutions. Astounding acts of mercy are found in the fray of this apparent contradiction. Where else but in the military chaplaincy would you find a faithful Baptist pastor, carrying a Muslim prayer card, so that in the event he is with a seriously ill Muslim, he can minister in a meaningful way? Arizona National Guard Chaplain, Captain Kurt Bishop is quoted as saying, “They don’t share my faith, but that doesn’t mean that I don’t need to be praying for them.”⁴⁸

Chaplains not only serve in a religiously complex environment and to an infinitely diverse community, they also stand as role models, prophets and voices for those without voice. Chaplains speak to the faith from which they come as well as serve to demonstrate that faith.

⁴⁷ Frank G. Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars*. Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, 2007.

⁴⁸ Janie Blankenship, *Chaplains Offer Solace During War*. Part II, Veterans of Foreign Wars, December 2008, p. 24.

And when chaplains are who they are called to be, when chaplains and their assistants stand tall as agents of the divine, they even serve as “Visible Reminders of the Holy.”

Chaplains also have a key responsibility to their commander. Joint Doctrine and present and emerging doctrine specifically states that RLL is a chaplain activity that is always initiated and requested by the chaplain’s commander. However, as the Army Chief of Chaplains stated, “The primary mission of the UMT (Unit Ministry Team) is to perform or provide religious support to the Army Family. RLL is a directed task to the UMT from the commander and does not represent a primary task; it is an operational capability the UMT can provide.”⁴⁹ Also, the Air Force Chief of Chaplains has recently issued a directive stating “RLL is a specific utilization of chaplains in their capacity as military chaplains....”⁵⁰ It is clear that the use of chaplains in an RLL capacity is secondary to his or her primary duties of caring for Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines.

A final note on operational matters regards that of Strategic Communications. Admiral James G. Stavridis, USN, and commander, U.S. Southern Command, recently said “nothing we do is more important than strategic communication.”⁵¹ The admiral later quotes Newt Gingrich as having said, “Strategic Communication in a real-time worldwide information system is a branch of the art of war comparable to logistics or intelligence. It will require staffing, educating and practicing at about the same level of resources as intelligence or logistics to be successful.”⁵² Admiral Stavridis and many others are convinced that in this age of media availability and little or no policing of information being done on the internet and television airwaves, we are constantly at battle with misperceptions and flat out lies about America’s purpose and intent.

⁴⁹ Army Chief of Chaplains Policy #3, Religious Leader Liaison. 30 September 2008.

⁵⁰ Air Force Chief of Chaplains Memorandum for the Chaplain Corps, 17 Nov 2008.

⁵¹ James G. Stavridis, Strategic Communication and National Security, Joint Forces Quarterly, Issue 46, 3rd Quarter, 2007.

⁵² Ibid.

Chaplains, in direct conversation with religious and community leaders, can have a huge affect on the perceptions and misperceptions that are plaguing our Peace Operations around the world.

The chaplain operational focus must be clear. At a minimum, we must establish the following:

1. Clear Joint and Service Doctrine delineating the left and right limits of RLL
2. Effective training that draws from the lessons learned of all chaplains engaged in RLL
3. Understand that RLL is not a primary mission and may not be suited for all chaplains⁵³
4. Chaplains must stay on message, a message that has been rehearsed and coordinated with Public Affairs personnel⁵⁴
5. Understand the associated risk and do everything possible to mitigate said risk
6. Never give anyone a reason to suspect a violation of noncombatant status

Finally, chaplains must be willing to organize, train and equip with an effects based mindset. As AFDD 2, Operations and Organization, doctrine states, “Cross-dimensional thinking involves considering more than just military tools or techniques to achieve desired effects. Diplomatic, informational, economic, cultural, legal and humanitarian means may also be available, and an effects-based approach should consider them all.”⁵⁵ RLL, if thought of in operational terms, can and will have an enormous effect on centers of gravity and the achievement of national aims.

⁵³ There likely will be chaplains, who for personal or theological reasons may find RLL outside the boundaries of their calling. We ought to be able to treat RLL as we do baptism, communion and other practices of the Church that are not shared by all.

⁵⁴ Message will include broad aims for US and coalition presence; the importance of Islam in community; the fact that most Americans are religious people; we share a common desire to help you achieve your desires and goals, etc

⁵⁵ AFDD 2, Operations and Organization, Chapter One, 3 April 2007.

The operational waters are somewhat obscure and the security risk is certain. However, RLL is a high-risk/high-reward Chaplain frontier. Fortunately, never in the history of the Chaplain Corps have chaplains been remembered for cowering from the responsibilities that are clearly theirs to own. To God be the Glory.

Conclusion

In his letter introducing the 2006 National Security Strategy, President George W. Bush said, “We choose leadership over isolationism.... We seek to shape the world, not merely be shaped by it; to influence events for the better instead of being at their mercy.”⁵⁶ It would appear that our nation, its military, and even its chaplain corps are at a crossroads. The proponents of status quo may effectively argue for a cautious return to chaplain basics; nurturing the living, care for the wounded and honoring the dead. This is a difficult argument to refute. Yet in an age of increasing rates of change; at a time in which reformation within our armed forces is happening at unprecedented levels; as unmanned aircraft slowly but surely take command of the skies and space and cyber become key and essential contributors to security; maybe it is time for the chaplain corps to add to its arsenal an operational element that if properly employed will better inform/advise commanders and move our nation ever closer to its national security objectives. If we do this right; if our doctrine, training and execution are done in a way that Glorifies God, Honors Airmen and exemplifies Excellence, commanders will be begging for more and more chaplains.

There is little doubt that the long war we are in has religious connotations. This Global War on Terror is not a war of religions as much as it is a war in which religious ideas are

⁵⁶ George W. Bush, Letter Introducing the 2006 National Security Strategy.

paramount. There can be no arguing that chaplains, as experts in religious complexities, have unique qualifications for inclusion in a multidisciplinary process that leads us ever closer to peace.

Speaking of unique qualifications and in answer to the question, why chaplains? Why not Civil Affairs Teams? Why not State Department? Why chaplains as lead in RLL? Chaplain Mike Hoyt, who served as the Command Chaplain for the Multinational Force-Iraq, recently participated in an inter-religious congress in Baghdad. Though Chaplain Hoyt was careful to say that this and other inter-religious councils are not the “silver bullet” needed for peace to break-out in Iraq, he was clear that these kinds of meetings are important ingredients to success and chaplains are essential members of the process.

As it evolved, what kept coming up from these religious leaders was they wanted to engage with an American clergyman, because this was a religious issue and they wanted to talk to what they decided was their religious counterpart. It had to be a guy with some status. They didn't just want to talk to any old body. So they decided that the senior chaplain in Iraq would be the guy that they wanted to engage with, because that position represented for them the leading religious leader for the coalition forces.⁵⁷

Chaplains are uniquely qualified and credentialed for the RLL task. The only question that remains is whether or not we will train and plan to make RLL a key option that commanders have in utilizing their chaplains in stability and peace operations.

The Italian airpower theorist Giulio Douhet, in speaking of a world that was changing before his very eyes, said “Victory smiles upon those who anticipate the changes in the character of war, not upon those who wait to adapt themselves after the changes occur.”⁵⁸ It is clear that monumental changes in the way we conduct war have and are occurring. The chaplain corps, will by necessity, be asked to change as well. Chaplains are not exempt. Our challenge will be to remain faithful and relevant in the years and in the wars to come. RLL may well be for chaplains

⁵⁷ http://www.defenselink.mil/home/blog/docs/Hoyt_Transcript.pdf

⁵⁸ Giulio Douhet, trans by Dino Ferrari, part I-II, Washington DC, Coward-McCann, 1983, p. 30.

what unmanned aerial vehicles are for aviators. Our answer to the call must be as it has always been; “Here am I Lord, send me.”

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